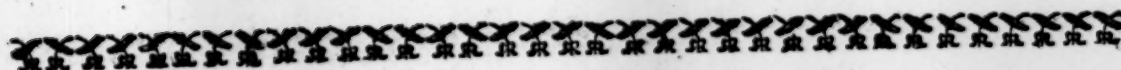


T H E
CONSTITUENTS.



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THE
CONSTITUENTS,
A
P O E M.

By P. STOCKDALE.

P. Ask you what Provocation I have had?
The strong Antipathy of Good to Bad.
When Truth or Virtue an Affront endures,
Th' Affront is mine, my Friend, and shou'd be yours.
Mine, as a Friend to ev'ry worthy Mind.
And mine, as Man, who feel for all Mankind.

F. You're strangely proud.—P. So proud, I am no Slave,
So impudent, I own myself no Knave,
So odd, my Country's Ruin makes me grave. }
Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see
Men not afraid of *God*, afraid of me:
Safe from the Bar, the Pulpit, and the Throne,
Yet touch'd and sham'd by Ridicule alone.

POPE's Epilogue to his Satires. DIAL. II.

L O N D O N :

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THE
C O N S T I T U E N T S.

A. **W**ELL, Theorist,—may’st thou not fail to find,
The balmy Visions of a dreaming Mind :
Be fruitless antiquated Virtue thine,
Let *D*——*l*, and Royal Smiles be mine.

B. Hast thou the Honour to be *Britain’s* Son,
And canst thou with such Arguments be won ?
But e’er thou fixest, pray, consider well,
Let not thy Head against thy Heart rebel.
For me, tho’ my Endeavours may be late,
I’ll still assert the Freedom of our State ;
Though ev’ry Wretch is sick of being free,
The dire Contagion shall not light on me ;

The horrid Project shall not quite be sped,
We shall not all be Slaves till I am dead.

A. If all your patriotic Efforts fail,
And *lawless B—e*, and Anarchy prevail ;
By steering thus inflexibly your Course,
Thus by opposing Feebleness to Force,
Nought to your Country sure you can propose,
And only to yourself a Train of Woes.

B. The Individual I'll, at present, wave,
And for our Country your Attention crave.

Bolder, and bolder tho' Corruption draws
More still, and more their Majesty from Laws,
Yet while a Particle of Hope remains,
Let other *Churchill's* wake their gen'rous Strains ;
Let honest *Englishmen* ward off Despair,
Nor of their Country drop the pious Care.

In better Times, when in the State's Machine
The just Effects of Government were seen ;

When Freedom's active, all-preserving Spring
Inspired, alike, the Cobler, and the King;
In those now gone, but memorable Days,
No Fear there was that from its noble Base
The Constitution of the Realm should fly,
Though one perverted Member stept awry.

But Politics wear now a darker Hue,
The *Social Compact*'s almost to renew;
Community's discordant Hinges jar,
And wage more dreadful than of Arms a War.
One *Monster*, more unnat'ral than the rest,
Although with *Britain*'s richest Favours blest,
Wants ev'ry upright Sentiment, or quells,
Against his Country, and his King rebels.
Breaks ev'ry Shoot of genuine *English* Worth,
With heavy Inundations from the *North*.
And (horrid but to think !) what still is worse,
As of our Crimes he were *God*'s chosen Curse;
To him from Hell to stay, methinks 'tis given,
Till every Patriot is dispatch'd to Heaven.

In such a Situation much depends
Whither each private Resolution tends ;
If to be Free is yet one's gen'rous Aim,
Or for low Purposes to quench the Flame.
One Vote may hasten *England's* hapless Doom,
One Vote again may bid her Glories bloom.

If you examine, in the human Frame,
The Case I've urg'd, is very much the same.
Beats your Heart strong, and is your Body hale ?
Shocks, e'en tho' rude, in vain the Man assail :
Soon rough Impediments away we fling,
And Health recovers its elastic Spring.

But Fancy on the Couch a Patient laid,
Fast posting to the Acherontic Shade :
Quick all his former Strength dissolves away,
Quick all the Principles of Life decay.
The cruel Quack Life's low Remainder drills,
Purges and bleeds, and if you let him,—kills.
But should *God* kindly put it in your Head,
To call a true Physician to the Bed,

An honest Man, accustom'd to dispense
A smaller Share of Gallipots than Sense ;
The stubborn Malady his Thoughts explore,
And Medicine's ample Region o'er and o'er :
At Length a Drug of grand Effect, though small,
Spent Health, by his Prescription, will recall ;
The salutary Drop new Life supplies,
Withhold the salutary Drop, he dies.

A. All this, I grant you, is extremely fine,
And Sense and Virtue breathe in ev'ry Line.
But then a Fellow, with a *Tyburn* Face,
Came down, and told me I must lose my Place
Unless I vote as —— *God* knows who prescribe ——
One's Bread, you know, sweet Sirs, a pow'rful Bribe.
Could you, my Soul ethereal, by your Leave,
Or e'er a Patriot of our State atchieve——
For your dear Country any glorious Feat,
Unless you did vouchsafe sometimes to eat?

B. No —— let me innocently have good Cheer
Till I am ripe for the funereal Bier :

I'll make the utmost of my little Span
Whilst I enjoy the Privilege of Man ;
I'll eat and drink, a Freeman, to my Grave,
But I will rather starve than be a Slave.
I too, myself, or have, or had a Post,
Perhaps it is this very Moment lost :
I saw the Government's, or the Tool's Tool ;
The Knave thought me his Brother, or a Fool ;
But soon my honest Heart the Spaniel told
" That *One* in *Britain* wou'd not yet be fold ;"
I bade him " know his Ground, and keep aloof,
" Slaves were not Vermin for my hallow'd Roof."
Gods ! how the Project makes my Anger boil ——
D——l's Friends engag'd shou'd now recoil ——

A. Promise, and then recant, good Teacher, say,
Is that the modern Patriotic Way ?

B. Never on any Doctrine be severe,
Till to its Force you lend a patient Ear.
If I had promis'd *D——l* my Vote,
Thus I'd address him, as a *Briton* ought.

" That I've already pledg'd my Vote, is true,
 " But now I find I pledg'd it not to you.
 " Methought I gave it to a Man, whose Soul
 " Brook'd not, nor would espouse unjust Controul;
 " Still strenuous to fulfill the good Intent
 " For which our Members to the House are sent;
 " Indignant that in this, or any Reign,
 " Full many a Hero shou'd have bled in vain;
 " That many shou'd in vain, for *England's* Wrong,
 " Have bid the Heart flow dauntless from the Tongue.
 " But now you'd rivet our unworthy Chains,
 " Back'd with a Terror which a Man disdains.
 " If thus you dare to injure us before,
 " Sure when you represent, you'll injure more:
 " The courtly Labyrinth I plainly see;
 " Ne'er shall a Tyrant find a Friend in me."

Is this a Trick, wou'd *Mazarine* aver?
Clarke, from the Gospel-Tenets, do I err?

A. Well,—my poor Heart cannot, like yours, expand;
 One has not noble Feelings at Command.

Doubtless you're right, in your superior Way,
 But I shall ne'er feel Heat from all you'll say.
 For little Self still at my Bosom knocks,
 Just as it stirs a *S—b—n*, or a *F—*.
 For Patriotism prune Fancy's tow'ring Wings,
 Despise King's Messengers, look down on Kings;
 I'll be content to live a home-spun Fool,
 Obedient kiss the Rod of sov'reign Rule;
 Nor, to my Grief, on Emptiness refine,
 While I have solid Gold, Roast-beef, and Wine.

B. Why am I preaching to a Lump of Earth?
 Why, Thou hast been mere Matter from thy Birth.
 'Tis rare to find, in these corrupted Days,
 One Throb for Virtue, or for Virtue's Praise.
 But, stupid Mortal, be not too secure;
 Nor think we're always wretched when we're poor.
 Conscience from Right, e'en when a Booby swerves,
 With Eye sagacious all his Crimes observes:
 And tho' he rocks her, for a Time, asleep,
 While gilded Knaves for him their Festals keep;

Yethis good injur'd Angel turn'd a Fiend,
Is not so soon from her Commission wean'd ;
With tenfold Fury from her Torpor wakes,
Darts in his Face her Sulphur, and her Snakes,
Distinguishing for ever to her Prey,
The Night with Horror, and with Shame the Day.

Be mine then, all Thou thinkest but a Dream ;
Thine be the Haunch's titillating Steam.
To think beneath myself I do not fall,
Will sooth the Voice of Hunger's piercing Call.
Tremble Thou ever while the *Great* pass by,
And let me view them with a steady Eye.

Come, *Virtue's* fair Companion, *conscious Thought* !
By the World's Empire not too dearly bought ;
The Pride of Youth, and the Support of Years,
That even canst mingle Ecstasy with Tears ;
Oh ! deign to take thy Mansion in my Breast,
And as I'm virtuous, ever make me blest ?
Make me still bold, to Manhood up, from Youth,
And ev'ry Friend of Liberty and Truth.

And when returning Seasons bring my Age
(The Care for ever of the Good and Sage)
Busy'd no more in the World's empty Strife,
When all deserts me, e'en my very Life;
Then, *conscious Thought*, refuse me not thy Aid,
But with thy Gleams refresh my lonely Shade.

But what for Thee, thou miscreant vile Remains,
When ebbing Nature creeps along thy Veins?
I shall possess the pure ethereal Joy,
Which Nought on Earth can heighten or annoy:
A floating painted Bubble but thy Share,
That Bubble broken by a Breath of Air;
Thy Heart with Joy elate, with Sorrow drown'd,
As a rich Puppy just hath smil'd or frown'd.
Perhaps the noblest Triumph of thy Soul
Will be the Chance of a *Sans prendre Vole*:
To flee thyself thou wilt be forc'd to crawl,
And strive to hop with *Burnett* at a Ball;
Consistent but in one infernal Plan,
To war with Nature, with thyself, and Man;

Splutter, the veriest wrangling Thing alive,
Swear Black is White, and Two and Three not Five ;
Vexing, breathe out thy latest Breath, and vext,
Loath'd by this World, and trembling for the next.

But diff'rent Entertainment will await
The constant Tenour of my mortal State ;
Pleasures, which only to myself I'll owe,
Pleasures, which *Thou* and *B—e* shall never know :
To the *World's* Glitter be thy Views resign'd ;
Give me the milder Lustre of the *Mind*.

BERWICK, Dec. 17,
1764.

F I N I S.

p®

THE CONSTITUTION

Spinter, the vessel wrangling thing
Swear Black is White, and Two and Three not One;
Vexing, break out thy last Black, and say
I am'd by this World, and coming to the end

But the same Entertainment is not
The constant Tenant of my mortal State;
Pleasure, which only to myself I owe
Pleasure, which I have and I shall have
To the World's Objection I have no
Give me the milder Lullaby of the Moon

Blank Verse

W I W I S